

T.P. 7-1-68

Minister's Life Threatened After Talking to Sirhan

He Almost Sold Horse to Accused Man

By JAMES D. WHITE
SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A Southern California evangelist says he almost sold a horse to the man accused of assassinating Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, and now is hiding out in fear of his life.

The Los Angeles police, who he says have his story, decline comment.

The Orange County Baptist minister, who does not want his name used and who will be called Jones, was interviewed at a hideout less than 100 miles from San Francisco.

WITH FRIENDS

Present were two of his longtime friends, Oakland private detective Ben Hardister and San Francisco criminal attorney George T. Davis. Both say they advised Jones to stay out of sight and are seeking protection for him and his family. He says he has had two threatening telephone calls.

Here is the gist of his long story:

He picked up two hitchhikers in Los Angeles on Monday, June 3, the day before the California Democratic primary which Kennedy won.

Jones says one of the youths was Sirhan Beshara Sirhan, the Jordanian accused of killing Kennedy. The other was taller, but seemed to Jones to be the same nationality.

TALKED HORSES

Since Jones is a horseman by avocation and buys and sells horses and Shetland ponies, they talked of horses.

Sirhan wanted to buy a pony to exercise race horses so he could get a job at a race track. Jones had one that suited, but Sirhan said he would not have the price, \$300, until late that night.

Sirhan asked to be let off near

the Ambassador Hotel "to see a friend in the kitchen." That night, Sirhan produced a \$100 bill, but said he wouldn't have the rest until 8 a.m. Tuesday.

At that time, Sirhan did not show up. Instead there was an older man who looked like the same nationality and said, "Joe couldn't make it." He said Sirhan really wanted the horse and could pay for it Tuesday night at 11 p.m. if Jones would deliver it at the same spot near the Ambassador Hotel "to see a friend in the kitchen." That night, Sirhan produced a \$100 bill, but said he wouldn't have the rest until 8 a.m. Tuesday.

At that time, Sirhan did not show up. Instead there was an older man who looked like the same nationality and said, "Joe couldn't make it." He said Sirhan really wanted the horse and could pay for it Tuesday night at 11 p.m. if Jones would deliver it at the same spot near the Ambassador Hotel where Jones had let him out.

The Ambassador is where Kennedy was shot.

GIVES MAN CARD

Jones said he was preaching out of town and couldn't make it. He gave the older man, whom he described as about 35 and expensively dressed, his business card with his unlisted telephone number.

On Wednesday, Jones did not hear that Kennedy had been shot until he was having lunch with friends. A picture of the still-unidentified suspect was

flashed on a television show, and Jones said he recognized the youth who had wanted to buy the horse.

The next day, Thursday, he got the first threatening telephone call, from a voice he never had heard and which had no accent. Three days later came another. He told police about the calls and also picked Sirhan's picture out of 30 they showed him.

ADVISED TO HIDE

Last Wednesday, he came north, looked up Hardister and told him his story. Hardister advised him to go into hiding and to consult Davis.

"What worries me is that the only man — besides the police — to whom I gave my unlisted phone number is that older man who told me 'Joe couldn't make it' and tried to get me to deliver the horse near the Ambassador Hotel Tuesday night," says Jones.

Davis says he and Hardister are insisting that Jones stay hidden until he gets some protection, preferably from police.

Jones says he went to police only because he felt he should and friends advised him to. He describes not only Sirhan and his youthful companion and the older man, but another apparent Jordanian man and a girl whom he saw Sirhan talk to during one of their stop and later saw with the older man who came to tell him Tuesday night "Joe couldn't make it." He describes the girl as "a dirty blonde... an American."